

OMNIBUS CLEARED IN CONGRESS

Sunday Congress cleared an omnibus measure for the President's signature. The omnibus, which encompassed six of the 12 annual fiscal 2010 spending bills, includes a total of \$446.8 billion in discretionary spending and about \$1.1 trillion when mandatory spending is factored in. Individual bills funded by the omnibus measure include Commerce-Justice-Science, Financial Services, Labor-HHS-Education, Military Construction-VA, State-Foreign Operations and Transportation-HUD. **The Labor-HHS-Education bill includes \$746 million for the Community Services Block Grant.**

Now the only fiscal 2010 spending bill remaining for Congress to clear is the Defense bill (HR 3326). Whether or not another CR is needed will largely be determined by what happens with the Defense package. The current continuing resolution (CR) providing funding for the government expires this Friday, December 18th. While leaders would prefer to avoid another extension, if complications arise over elements included in the Defense package, a short-term CR extension may be needed to ensure the Pentagon stays funded while the measure works its way to the president's desk.

To learn more visit: http://appropriations.house.gov/Subcommittees/sub_lhhse.shtml

MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Leaders plan to package most of this year's remaining legislative business with the last appropriations bill — Defense — which is expected to begin moving early this week. House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) has stated that some of the most important pending items that will hitch a ride on the Defense spending bill, are "social safety net" items such as an extension of unemployment insurance, COBRA health insurance subsidies, and additional food stamp benefits for laid off workers. Also possible is legislation to prevent the estate tax from disappearing on January 1st, extend federal highway and transit programs, extend provisions of the anti-terrorism law known as the Patriot Act and more.

Leaders also must determine the extent to which they can include proposals aimed at creating or saving jobs. With unemployment at 10 percent, Democrats are intent on moving a new package to quickly create jobs, but are unable to move separate legislation this month because Senate consideration of health care is using up almost all available floor time in that chamber. Democrats are focusing on funding for infrastructure projects, as well as aid to help state governments that are facing budget shortfalls to avoid laying off workers or reducing services. They would like infrastructure funding to be available for crews to get to work when road construction season starts in the spring. And they want new assistance to states to be available before July, when most states start their new fiscal years.

The House hopes to leave for the year by the end of this week, while the Senate expects to remain in session longer dealing with its health care overhaul bill. As such, they may well be conducting business the week between Christmas and New Year's.

(Source: Congressional Quarterly)